

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

A Detective Story Wherein the Mystery of the Conrad Murder is Unravelled.

SYNOPSIS

Gordon, a newspaper reporter, is awakened by a telephone summons to visit the residence of Anthony Conrad, a retired broker, who has been found dead on his couch.

Suspicion points to Gustav Conrad, his nephew, with whom he had quarreled the night before and who to all appearances tried to commit suicide after killing his uncle.

Physicians find that Gustav has a chance to recover. The will leaves \$5,000 to Gustav and the balance of the estate to George Mallet, another nephew.

Not satisfied with the apparent solution of the case, Semi Dual, the old man of mystery, takes a hand in the le of human life.

Dual asks Gordon to go with Johnson of the detective force and search the Conrad premises thoroughly for other evidence.

They find a footprint beneath a window and a finger print on the sill and also secure the will itself, for inspection and comparison with the two nephews' handwritings, which Miss Burton aids in getting.

Gordon, the detectives and Mallet are summoned before Semi Dual to learn his deductions from the evidence secured.

"You are right, Gordon," he admitted. "The crime was planned to make it appear that Gustav had killed his uncle and then made way with himself. But, as nearly always happens, the criminal made some mistakes. Furthermore, he overlooked or did not know of the strides which scientific criminology has recently made, or that chemistry has come to play a great part in the work of criminologists of late. In this case it will serve to tell the entire story of a crime."

"And the footprints, the finger-marks?" I added.

"Corroborative testimony," said Semi Dual.

"You may be interested," he went on, "to know that there is a fingerprint on the back of this note which you brought from Mallet. He probably made it when he folded the page to enclose it. It is hard for the average man nowadays to escape leaving those traces of his handling."

I was surprised, but then I had no opportunity to examine the note. I shook my head and smiled.

"Still," I remarked, "I can't see how chemistry is going to solve this crime."

"You will," said Semi, "when the others get here."

"And will Conrad really recover?" I asked. "Sommers seemed to think he had a very slight chance."

"He will recover," Dual asserted confidently. "Furthermore, he will recover with his mental qualities unimpaired. Fortunately, he was shot on the right side of his brain."

"Why fortunately?" I asked in surprise.

"Because," said my friend, "that is what may be called the latent area of the brain of the average individual. Nature in her wonderful foresight has given most of us a vast reserve supply of tissue. We have two lungs, yet we can live with one; two eyes, yet we can see with one; two ears and most of us but one to any great extent."

"So with the brain. The average person uses but about one-half of his mental tissue, in the usual case the left half. Judging by his writing, Gustav was right-handed; and, therefore, the left half of his brain is the active half. Even though the bullet wounded the right half, if it did not cause serious hemorrhage his recovery should be perfect."

"And what makes you so sure he will live? Did you question the future as regards his fate?"

"Precisely, Gordon. After I had settled the major questions of the crime, and after you left here at noon, I set up a figure of Conrad's condition. He will recover if we are to believe the stars. Venus is so aspected in his figure that the very attitude of his sweetheart will exercise a holding, strengthening effect on his fate. By sending Miss Burton the message of hope I added to her ability to use that influence for his good."

I shook my head.

"It's wonderful!" I said. "You literally play on the scale of fate, as a virtuoso plays on the keys of his instrument. I'll warrant there isn't much latent tissue lying around inside your skull."

Dual smiled slightly.

"That is a truth and a secret of evolution," he replied. "I am inclined to believe that I still have sufficient unused cells to serve my purpose. I'd

be loath to feel that I had reached the limits of my capacity for growth, and yet that is one advantage of re-birth into new lives—we gain new tissues commensurate with our evolution. Those who study deeply and learn gradually call into use more and more of their reserve tissues. However, when I compare what I know to what I desire to learn I am not at all dismayed at the thought."

"And," said I, "when I compare what you know and what I know I am utterly dismayed."

Dual actually laughed.

"That is a sincere compliment and a sign of hope for you in the future," he smiled.

He glanced at the clock in the corner and sobered.

"The hour is drawing near, Gordon, which shall see the wicked confounded. Every pulse-beat, every tick of the clock, is drawing from the little reserve of time which yet remains to them. Soon time shall be ended, its last second spent, and for them naught but eternity shall remain."

My eyes opened.

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"Will justice bring—"

"Justice?" said Semi Dual. "He who takes life must pay—with life. That is the law of man and of God. Why will not man learn to obey the law?"

"A life for a life and a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye—Mosaic doctrine," said I.

"Moses was educated by the Egyptian priesthood, at that time the most advanced cult of students of life in the world," Dual took up my statement. "Moses only preached the law of cause and effect—of retributive justice, if you like. Hark!"

The chimes rang out from the tower.

In the room the great clock was striking five. In the midst of it all a crash of thunder drowned the lesser sounds.

Dual rose and switched on the lights.

Voices sounded in the next room and a tap fell upon the door.

Semi crossed and set it wide, admitting Johnson, Bryce, and Mallet, and motioning them to seats.

I saw Bryce's eyes open.

The only time he had seen Dual he was wearing his blue-and-white robe. The inspector seemed surprised at the change to the working dress of the chemist. He drew his chair close to mine.

"What has he done with his bathrobe?" he whispered.

Dual's voice interrupted ere I could answer.

"Now, inspector, if you and Detective Johnson will give me the evidence you have we will be ready to begin."

Both men rose and began emptying their pockets. Bryce laid down the gun found beside Conrad and the paper in which he had wrapped the hairs taken from Anthony Conrad's clenched hands.

Johnson turned over the will, the finger tracings, the bit of dried, white substance from the desk, and the notes as to the size of the footprints.

Then the two officers resumed their seats.

Dual took the several articles and laid them with the things I had brought. Then, seating himself at the desk, he glanced at the measurements of the footprints, the tracing of the marks on the window-sill, the finger-print on the will, turned and picked up Mallet's note and scanned its back, nodded, and laid it down.

"And now we are ready to begin," he said.

Another crash of thunder rolled about us.

"Begin what?" asked Mallet when it had died away.

"The scientific demonstration of who intended the double murder at the Conrad house last night," said Semi Dual.

CHAPTER VIII.

Semi Dual Explains.

"Double murder?" repeated Mallet.

"Yes Mr. Mallet."

"But I thought my cousin was supposed to have committed suicide? I don't think I understand—"

"I am going to endeavor to make you do so," Dual replied. "Now, if you gentlemen will listen closely I will begin to explain my theory of this case, which, instead of being a murder and suicide as at first stated, proves to be a cowardly and treacherous murder and an attempt at another which probably failed only because of lack of knowledge on the part of the murderer."

"Do you mean that some one shot my cousin with his own gun?" in-

quired Mallet, somewhat ill at ease.

"Not at all," Dual returned. "I mean, however, that on the very face of the case your cousin could not have possibly shot himself."

He picked up Conrad's gun and handed it to Bryce.

"Break that and take out all the loads," he directed. "Then hold the barrel to your nose."

Without remark the inspector complied.

"Can you smell fresh powder?" inquired Dual.

Bryce, sniffing, lowered the gun and looked him full in the face.

"No, I can't," he admitted in shame-faced accents. "No, Dual, I can't."

Dual waved him to give the gun to Johnson.

"And you, detective?" he asked.

Johnson shook his head. A dull red crept into his cheeks.

"Yet," said Dual, reaching for the revolver, "a weapon discharged less than twenty-four hours ago should show evidences of powder sediment, should it not? Now, to make sure, suppose we look further."

He took a small, stiff wire and wound some cotton about it and gently swabbed the barrel. It came out very slightly blackened and showing evidences of a slight quantity of oil.

Dual exhibited it and smiled.

"There is the first blunder of the assassin," he remarked. "He should have discharged the gun so as to have fouled its barrel and made it plain that it had been recently used."

"We ought to have thought of that, Bryce," declared Johnson.

"Shut up; we're going to school yet!" growled the inspector. "We're out of it. Let Dual talk."

Semi turned immediately to Bryce.

"Now, inspector," he requested, "look at the bullets which you removed from this revolver just now and tell me what sort of loads they are."

"That's easy," returned Bryce. "They're thirty-twos, ordinary center-fire, soft nose."

"Then they would fit any ordinary thirty-two caliber revolver?"

"Yes, Mr. Dual."

"It is a fact that standard caliber cartridges can be used in all standard weapons, is it not?" Semi continued.

"Yes."

"Now"—Semi picked up the bullet I had brought from the hospital—"what sort of a bullet is that, inspector?"

Bryce took it and opened his eyes as he turned it in his hand.

"It's a thirty-two, steel-jacketed ball, Dual."

"Yet that is the bullet which Sommerville dug out of Gustav Conrad's brain, inspector?"

Bryce and Johnson both nodded.

"Now," Dual went on, "look at the mark on the cartridges you hold and tell me what make they are."

"They're Remingtons," announced Bryce.

"And"—Dual took up the revolver and broke it, displaying the back of the empty shell—"this is a Remington, too; only those you have held soft nosed slugs, and this one contained the bullet I just handed to you. Now is it probable that a man contemplating suicide would load his weapon with four soft-nosed bullets and one steel bullet, and then carefully select the latter to fire into his brain?"

"It doesn't seem likely," admitted Johnson.

"In fact, isn't it true that he would have stood a better chance of killing himself at close range with the soft-nosed bullet?"

"Yes, it is," said Bryce.

Dual nodded and laid down the gun.

"All this," he resumed, "is merely leading up to the establishment of a doubt as to the wound's having been self-inflicted. It is necessary to prove the suicide theory untenable before we can confidently declare that the murder was attempted, and that is what I am now trying to do."

"Supposing that suicide was not attempted, then we have but one other conclusion to fall back upon. After the murderer had shot Conrad he must have taken one of the loaded shells from Conrad's own gun and replaced it with the empty shell from his own, and then have laid the weapon beside Conrad's hand."

A match crackled in the room.

I glanced up at the sound. Mallet had drawn a cigar from his pocket and was lighting it.

"There is other evidence to support the contention that it was no suicide," Dual went on without noticing Mallet's action. "In all the annals of suicide deaths there is not one case in which the party taking his own life with a firearm inflicted the wound in the region of the eyes!"

"The probable reason for this is that there is something unnerving even to one courting death, in the view of the barrel of the gun; and further, a horror of putting out the window of sight, which causes them to select some other equally effective point upon which to direct their fire."

"Yet I am told that the wound in Gustav Conrad's head is directly above the right eye, and that the lid of that eye was blackened with powder. Hence, all things considered, I

am justified in stating that Conrad did not commit suicide."

"And if he did not commit suicide he did not kill his uncle, for that alone was the only logically existing motive which could have driven him to death at his own hands. Therefore, Gustav Conrad is entirely innocent!"

Dual paused and looked about the room and smiled.

"And so, gentlemen, as soon as I knew where the wound was I knew equally that Conrad had been the victim of a dastardly plot. That alone sufficed to start me to searching for the man who crept upon him last night and shot him down with a revolver equipped with a Maxim silencer."

The cigar fell from Mallet's fingers. I glanced at him and saw that his jaw had dropped, and that surprised horror sat upon his face.

"How," he began—"how do you know that a silencer was used?"

"There was no shot heard, for one thing," returned Dual. "We must remember that the uncle slept only a little way off in a connected suite. He was old, and probably a light sleeper. Had he heard the shot he would undoubtedly have risen and attempted to investigate, but the evidence shows that he was not disturbed, and that he was strangled in his bed. Probably the assassin's hands themselves roused him from sleep."

Mallet had picked up his cigar and now fumbled it into his mouth. He nodded.

"Aside from that," continued Dual, "we can learn the same fact from the powder marks. Dr. Sommerville described these to me. I have in the past made a careful study of the actions of firearms. I have been with armies in the field, and I have observed various gunshot wounds inflicted in every manner."

"A gun equipped with a silencer makes a peculiar mark, different from one not so provided. The marks on Conrad's forehead and eyelids are those which a weapon so equipped would produce. Yet there was no silencer on Conrad's gun. Here again the assassin's very precaution proves to furnish a clue to the fact that he was there."

"Granting that you have proved that there was a third party who did all this, how does it help to show who it may have been?" said Mallet as Dual paused.

"That will develop as we go along. It is the next step I shall consider, Mr. Mallet," responded Dual.

He reached out and picked up the note-book containing the measurements of the footprints which we had made.

"Briefly," he began, "we may describe the murderer as a man slightly under six feet, say about five feet eleven inches in height, well built, wearing probably a number eight and a half or a nine glove, of medium complexion, with brown hair and a reddish brown mustache, and quite muscular. I deduce this description from several things."

"In the first place we have the measurements of two of his footprints which indicate that he probably wears a number eight shoe. Figuring from averages this would give us his probable approximate height. This is also supported by the fact that he entered the house last night through an open window some five feet from the ground. He entered by reaching over the sill, gripping the inner ledge and raising himself by his hands until he could throw a leg over the sill, which we must admit is not the act of a man muscularly weak."

"His height is also further shown by the fact that the foot of the leg he threw over the sill first struck the floor inside on the heel of the shoe. A smaller man would have reached for the floor with his toe. This, then, may be said to prove his being a tall man."

"Furthermore, when he reached through the window and seized the sill he naturally left the marks of his firmly gripping fingers on the wood. Those marks were found, and here"—he turned and picked up the carbon tracing of the marks Johnson had brought—"is their record taken today by the police."

"And the hairs prove his complexion!" fairly chortled Bryce. "Gad, Dual, this is the best thing I ever listened to. You make me feel like Dr. Watson."

Semi smiled slightly.

"The hairs found in the hands of the elder Conrad certainly prove that the murderer wore a reddish-brown mustache. The picture is plain. The man crept to the bed slowly, stealthily."

Dual's voice became low and monotonous.

"Can't you see him gentlemen—can't you see him with his hands already reddened with the blood of the man he shot, come slipping into the alcove, pausing at the curtains, drawing them aside, peering at a weak old man in a bed, advancing on tiptoe, his hands out before him, groping for the thin old neck? Nearer and nearer, nearer and nearer, until he stands at the bedside."

"His hands go out, the fingers like

reaching claws, they descend and clutch the old man's neck and press and press, their ends digging into the flesh until the nails on them cut the skin of the victim. The old man wakes, he struggles—to what avail—he is a child in that strangling grip. He reaches up and claws at the cruel face above him and tears a few hairs from a reddish-brown mustache."

It was vivid, gripping, horrible, as his level tones told it. I felt myself chill and quiver.

I glanced at Johnson and Bryce. They sat leaning forward as though viewing the actual scene. I glanced at Mallet and found his eyes staring, his face bloodless, his forehead beaded with sweat which glistened in the light.

As Dual paused he sighed as one coming out from a heavy sleep.

"Could I have a glass of something?" he asked. "I'm a bit shaken by all this. That was horrible, Mr. Dual."

Dual pressed a button for Henri and directed him to serve Mallet with anything he might desire.

He called for whisky, and Henri left the room.

Semi turned to the desk and arranged two papers upon it.

"In order to make sure I had Sommerville send me some of the hairs from Gustav Conrad's mustache," he resumed. "These are his."

He laid the hairs from the hospital on one of the sheets of paper and marked them.

"These," he went on, "are those from Anthony Conrad's hands."

He took those Bryce had brought and placed them on the other sheet.

"Viewed through a good glass you will see that the two hairs do not bear the same qualities, though there are some resemblances. However, there is a difference, and that is all we require to prove that they grew upon different lips. Any expert in the line will verify my statements. Thus we see that the hairs Anthony Conrad held in his dead hands were not such hairs as he could have drawn from Gustav's face. Have I made myself clear to you all?"

For the first time he turned his eyes fully upon Mallet.

Mallet nodded and made no other reply. Henri returned with his whisky and he tossed it off at a gulp.

"So now we know that there was a murderer, and that he was a man such as I have described, and we have an actual print of his fingers, and of his foot. It should be easy enough to trace the man from these things. However, it is well to be absolutely sure of all we do and say in a thing like this. While I do not feel that there can be any doubt about the deductions we have made—"

"I should say not! They're riveted!" exclaimed Bryce.

"That we have made," Semi resumed, "still it may be just as well to call in the material sciences to show that they are true, and prove beyond any question or criticism that Gustav Conrad did not shoot himself. I have prepared to do that before we go any further in the matter of finding the criminal himself. Inspector, come over here by the desk and remove the loads from those cartridges you hold."

Bryce rose immediately, dragged a chair over to the desk and busied himself with digging the bullets out of the shells.

"Be careful not to spill the powder," cautioned Semi.

He himself drew the alcohol lamp to him and lighted its wick, then taking four small steel plates arranged them before himself upon the desk, slipping a sheet of white paper beneath each one.

Next he drew several bottles of reagents toward him and a rack of test tubes, picked up the gun from the desk and removed the discharged shell from its cylinder, setting it upon another sheet of paper open end up.

Meanwhile Bryce had succeeded in unloading the four shells and Dual poured the powder from each into a little pile beside one of the steel squares.

(To be continued)

Sharks After 150 Years Absence.

Sharks have appeared in the Baltic sea, after an absence of nearly 150 years. Sharks are still to be met with in the Mediterranean, but the northern seas had long been rid of them. But now fishermen report that in the narrows of the Cattegat and the Belt these dangerous fish are once more to be seen, and that they follow the boats to attack the nets as they are being hauled in. It is also said that some of the fishermen have had narrow escapes with their lives. There are shoals of sharks in the North sea, and along the coasts of Germany and Norway they are to be found in considerable numbers.

Island Ruled Entirely by Women.

Tiburou, an island in the Gulf of California, is ruled entirely by women. The inhabitants are a remnant of the Sevis tribe of Indians, formerly numbering about 5,000, but now shrunken to a few hundreds. They live in almost complete isolation and refuse to marry any of the Indians of the mainland. The woman is head of the household, and a council of matrons conducts public affairs.

Married or Single

The Persons.

Boniface, landlord of a small town hotel.

Mrs. Boniface, his wife.

A bachelor of 45.

Bystanders, more or less innocent.

The Place—Lobby of the hotel. The time 10:30 of an October night. Mrs. Boniface is standing behind the counter. The bachelor of 45 leans over the counter engagingly and gnaws a cigar. The bystanders are smoking, writing letters, listening.

Mrs. B.—I tell you it's the women that keep this country from going to ruin today. If there weren't any women there wouldn't be anything worth having.

The Bachelor—Kind of throwing bouquets at yourself, aren't you Mrs. Boniface?

Mrs. B.—No, I'm not. I'm talking about women in general. Who is it sets a town cleaned up, anyhow? The women. They're the one that want good schools and clean streets and no saloons. (Boniface nods his head mournfully.) They keep at men till they do. Men would never do anything progressive if it wasn't for the women. They'd just leave things like they are and sit and smoke their pipes and say, "Oh, well it might be worse."

Huh, I know men.

(The Bachelor looks jocularly at Boniface and winks one eye, Boniface affects not to see.)

The Bachelor (straightening up and essaying dignity)—You women have got an exaggerated idea of your own importance. Why, if it wasn't for men you wouldn't get anything done. Not anything at all. Who'd pay your bills?

Mrs. B.—(Angrily)—We'd pay 'em ourselves. Enough of us have to, anyhow. And I know some women—not me, but some—that pay their husbands' bills, too. Catch me doing that!

Boniface nods his head approvingly, and beams around at the assemblage. His smile says quite plainly "See what a smart wife I have. It isn't everybody has as smart a wife as mine. It isn't every man that is able to attract that smart a woman." He says nothing out loud, however.

The Bachelor—Well, you can't tell me anything I don't know about women, Mrs. Boniface.

Mrs. B. (more sweetly)—Is that so? You must be married.

The Bachelor—Who? Married? Me? I should say not. I know too much for that. No, I'm too old for that. Believe me, I play round with a lot of them, but no woman could ever marry me. Uh-huh.

Mrs. Boniface's mouth sets in a thin firm line. The Bachelor is making light of the married state and boasting of his immunity. He is, therefore, an enemy of all womankind and ought to be humbled as soon as possible. He ought to be married too, Mrs. B. thinks and a right firm woman, Mrs. B. thinks so much that she is unable to express herself at all.

The Bachelor—Well, good night all. Me for the hay. Ho, hum! G'night, Mrs. Boniface.

Mrs. B. (briefly and with the smallest degree of cordiality possible in a hotel keeper's wife who has an eye to the till)—Good night.

The bachelor goes out.

Mrs. B.—Huh! Think no woman could ever marry him—does he? The idiot! Why any woman could marry him that took a notion to! Easy as pie. Be a good thing for him, too. I wish one would. But I don't guess one ever will. So fat and old! Come on Harry, it's time that we locked up.

Curtain.

RIGHT AND WRONG

Prof. Thomas R. Lounsbury told the following at Cambridge in a talk on English:

"But precision can be carried too far. The ultra precise, even when logically right, are really wrong."

"An ultra precise professor went to a hardware shop and said:

"Show me a shears, please."

"You mean a pair of shears, don't you?" said the dealer.

"No," said the professor, "I mean what I say. I mean a shears."

"The dealer took down a box of shears."

"Look here, professor," he said. Aren't those two blades here? And don't you make a pair?"

"Well, you've got two legs. Does that make you a pair of men?" And the professor smiled at the dealer triumphantly thru his spectacles.

"He was logically right, but really he was wrong."

An Adequate Reason.

The moon was casting flickering shadows over a pair of lovers as they sat side by side in Battery Park. He glanced out across the water and saw the Statue of Liberty in the shadowy gloom.

"I wonder why they have its light so small?" he broke in on the blissful silence.

"Perhaps," answered she in a soulful tone, as she coquettishly tried to slip from his arm, "the smaller the light the greater the liberty."

Some Diplomats.

That fellow Miggs is a pretty smooth proposition."

"Yes?"

"Why, he's got his wife jollied into believing that she is the only one in the family who knows how to run a furnace."